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*The Duties of Pastors to their Flocks,
considered;* *695. f 4*

I N A
S E R M O N

PREACHED in
H A R E - C O U R T,
A L D E R S G A T E - S T R E E T,
L O N D O N :

At the setting apart the
Reverend Mr WILLIAM KING,
TO THE
OFFICE and WORK of a PASTOR,
in the late Mr BRUCE's Church,
February 13, 1739-40.

By PETER GOODWIN.

Published at the united Request of that Church,
and the Ministers and Messengers of other
Churches present.

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The Duties of Teachers in their Halls
considered

IN A

SERMON

PREACHED BY

ALBERT G. URBAN

AT THE

CHURCH OF THE

REV. WILLIAM H. H. H.

TO THE

OFFICE AND BOARD OF A PASTOR

IN THE CHURCH OF THE

REV. WILLIAM H. H. H.

BY PETER H. GOODWIN

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I P E T. V. 2, 3, 4.

Feed the Flock of God which is among you, taking the Oversight thereof, not by Constraint, but willingly; not for filthy Lucre, but of a ready Mind; neither as being Lords over God's Heritage, but being Ensamples to the Flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away.

THIS Epistle is directed to the converted *Jews*, dispersed in the several Provinces, mentioned in the Beginning of it. And the Design of it is to explain more fully the Doctrines of Christianity; to support them under their heavy Persecutions; and to direct and persuade them to an holy Conversation, in the faithful Discharge of all personal and relative Duties, whereby they would secure their own Peace, and effectually confute the Slanders and Reproaches of their Enemies.

At the Beginning of this Vth Chapter, the Apostle addresseth himself particularly to the

Pastors and Ministers of those Churches, and exhorts them to take especial Care of the Flocks committed to them. And we may a little reflect, who it is that exhorts them; what he exhorts them unto; and how he enforces his Exhortation.

The Person, who gives the Exhortation, is no other, no less a Person than *St Peter*, who was a most eminent Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. But to give the greater Force to it, he humbly placeth himself in the same Rank with them, and calleth himself their Synpresbyter, or Fellow-Elder; thereby insinuating, that he puts nothing upon them, but what he was ready to attend to himself. *The Elders which are among you I exhort, who are also an Elder* *. How different was the Spirit and Behaviour of this Apostle, from that of his pretended Successors at *Rome*! He doth not command and domineer, but exhort; he doth not claim a Sovereignty over all Pastors and Churches; nor stile himself Prince of the Apostles, Vicar of Christ, or Head of the Church; but values himself upon being an Elder. It is natural, as a learned Writer † has observed, for Persons endowed with unquestionable Authority, (however otherwise prudent and modest) to discover a Spice thereof in the Matter or Stile of their Writing. Their

* Ver. 1.
 premacy, pag. 62.

† Dr Barrow on the Pope's Supremacy,

Their Mind, conscious of such Advantage, will suggest an authoritative Way of Expression; especially when they earnestly exhort, or seriously reprove. But the most curious and prying Critick can find, in the Epistles of this Apostle, no Intimation of, no Air of Pretence to, that Arch-apostolical Power, that is ascribed to him at *Rome*, and which the Popes lay claim to, as his Successors. To be sure, there is nothing of this appears in the Exhortation before us. Had he been what they make him, he might have said, I, the peculiar Vicar of Christ, and Sovereign of the Apostles, do not only exhort, but require this of you. This Language had been very proper, and no less forcible; but nothing like this, nothing of the Spirit and Majesty of a Pope is here seen. No; notwithstanding he was a Witness of the Sufferings of Christ, he yet ranks himself among them, and is not ashamed of the Stile and Title of a Fellow-Elder with them. *The Elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an Elder.* But they are the Exhortation itself, and the Apostle's Enforcement of it, that the present Occasion requires us chiefly to consider; and these we have in the Verses of the Text. He exhorts them *to feed the Flock of God which was among them, taking the Oversight thereof, &c*; and enforces his Exhortation with the strongest and most powerful Motive, *viz.* that if they carefully and faithfully discharged the

the Duties of their Office, *they should receive a Crown of Glory* that fadeth not away, when the chief Shepherd shall appear.

And that I may render these Words useful for our Instruction and Direction, I shall, thro' divine Assistance, in discoursing from them, briefly consider

I. The Persons, to whom this Exhortation is given.

II. The Duties incumbent upon those Persons.

III. The Manner, in which they ought to attend to those Duties.

IV. The Force of the Motive or Argument by which they are urged upon them. And then from the whole infer,

V. The Duty of the Flock to the chief Shepherd, to one another, and to those Ministers that faithfully discharge the Duties of their Office. Let us,

I. Consider the Persons, to whom this Exhortation is given. Who these are, we learn from *ver. 1.* They are the Elders, that were in the several Churches of the dispersed Jewish Converts. *The Elders which are among you I exhort.* But who are meant by these Elders,

ders, is Matter of Dispute. Some, who think
 themselves concerned to find Diocesan Epis-
 copacy in the New Testament, contend, that
 they were superiour Bishops; an Order
 of Persons distinct from, and above, that
 of ordinary Elders. Others conceive, that
 they were mere Elders, or Pastors of parti-
 cular Flocks, that had none but Apostles and
 Evangelists above them. But, without en-
 tering on the Particulars of this Debate, it is
 very plain from the Text, that as the Elders,
 here addressed, were such as had the Over-
 sight of their respective Flocks; so they had
 no more to oversee than they were able to
 feed, and take Care of, and account for:
(i. e.) They were Pastors of particular Church-
 es. They were such Elders as the Apostles
 ordained in every Church *; And such as
 Paul ordered Titus to ordain in every City †.
 And indeed, whatever is pretended to the con-
 trary, such Elders are true and proper Bishops
 in the full Scriptural Sense of the Word.
 This appears from hence, that there is not
 only in Scripture an Identity of Name be-
 tween Bishops and Elders; but an Identity
 of Work and Office also. The Apostle, in
 our Text, seems to have known no Dif-
 ference between them. He in Effect disclaims
 any such thing, when he charges these Elders
 [ἐπισκοπεῖν]

* Acts xiv. 23. † Tit. i. 5.

[ἐπισκοπεῖν] to bishop it, or act the Part of Bishops over the Flock of God. This Testimony is so full and plain, and so little favourable to the Hierarchy, that it required some Art to elude the Force of it, at least to cover it from the Observation of common Readers. And therefore our Translators have (designedly no doubt) rendered it [*taking the Oversight thereof*]. Nor doth the Apostle Paul seem to have known any Difference between Bishops and Elders; for he, all along in his Epistles, gives Gospel-Ministers the one or the other Name indiscriminately, without the least Intimation that there was any one thing that the one could do which the other could not do as well. When he ordered Titus to ordain Elders in every City, if any be blameless &c, he gives this Reason for it, *because a Bishop must be blameless* *. Where he must mean the same Persons and Office by both Names: Otherwise there would be no Congruity of Speech, no Consequence of Reason in what he asserts. In like manner he charges the Elders at Ephesus, to take heed to themselves and all the Flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them Bishops †. So it should be rendered, altho' here likewise our Translators (with the same View as in the Version of our Text) use the Word, Overseers.

* Tit. i. 5.

† Ἐπισκοπος.

seers *. " These Elders, as one observes upon the Words, were either Elders only and not Bishops, or Bishops only and not Elders, or the same Persons were Elders and Bishops. If the first be asserted, there were then no Bishops at *Ephesus*; for these Elders had the whole Oversight of the Flock committed to them. If the second, then there were no Elders at all, which is directly to contradict the Scripture, which saith, The Apostle called to him *the Elders of the Church*. The last therefore alone is true, that the same Persons were Elders and Bishops." The same Names are equally common and applicable to them; their Function was the same; their Qualifications and Characters the same in Scripture-Times; and we may therefore conclude, that they were essentially the same; and that what Difference, what Inequality, hath since been made between them, is of Man's ordaining, and not of God's appointing. So then, the Elders, here meant, are Pastors, who have the Oversight of particular Churches, and reside in them for that End; and these are true and proper Bishops in the scriptural Sense of the Word. And we are next,

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II. To

* Acts xx. 28.

II. To consider the Duties which these Persons are exhorted unto. *Feed the Flock of God, taking the Oversight of it, and being Ensamples to it.* Where we have both the Object, and the Matter of the Duties incumbent on them.

I. The Object of these Duties is the *Flock of God which was among them*, (i. e.) those particular Churches, to which they respectively stood related. The Church of the living God in general is frequently called *his Flock* in Scripture, in Distinction from the rest of Mankind; which, tho' it be comparatively a little Flock, yet absolutely, and in it self considered, is very large, and comprehends in it all the chosen of God from the Beginning of the World to the End of Time; all the faithful that have been in former Ages, and are now dispersed up and down, and scattered over the Face of the Earth. And particular Churches and Congregations of Christians, being but so many Parts, and, as it were, distinct Folds of these, they have the same Title and Denomination given to them. And it is a Title and Denomination, that is expressive both of their Dignity, and of their Duty. They are (as the poor, dispersed, suffering Societies of Christians, referred to in the Text, were) *the Flock of God*; chosen by him out of the

the World; redeemed and purchased by the Blood of his Son; and called effectually by his Grace to Fellowship with him here, and to an everlasting Kingdom and Inheritance hereafter. And they are *the Flock of God*, and should therefore demean themselves, and act suitably to their Dignity and Character; hearkening to the Voice of the great Shepherd; submitting to his Conduct and Government; and learning of him to be meek and patient and inoffensive, to be loving and useful and sociable; living in holy Love and Communion with one another according to the Will of God.

They are, moreover, dignified with the Title of *God's Heritage* or Clergy *. Which Term, tho' now by common Use applied and appropriated, yet is never in the New Testament restrained to the Ministers of Religion only. Much less doth it here signify, as a learned Doctor † imagines, the Patrimony or Possessions; but the Members of the Church. They are *God's Heritage*; his peculiar Lot, chosen out of the common Multitude to be a peculiar People to him, to enjoy his special Favour, and to be for a Seed to serve him in their Day and Generation. These are the Objects of these Duties, *the Flock* and *the Heritage* of God.

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* Κλήρη.

† Dr *Whitby* in loc.

As such should Ministers consider the People, committed to their Care; and treat them accordingly with Love, and Meekness, and Tenderneſs, and Faithfulneſs, for his ſake whoſe they are, and to whom they belong.

2. The Duties incumbent on Elders, with reſpect to them, are reduced in the Text to three Heads. They are required to *feed the Flock*; to *take the Overſight* of it; and to *be Enſamples* to it. They are required,

First, *To feed the Flock of God*; to feed them by preaching the ſincere Word of God to them; and by ruling them according to ſuch Directions, and with ſuch Diſcipline, as the Word of God preſcribes. Elders muſt *feed the Flock of God* by ſound and wholeſome Doctrines, preaching the ſincere Word of God to them. It is a Promise of God to his Church (a Promise that relates to Goſpel-Times), that *he will give them Paſtors according to his own Heart, which ſhall feed them with Knowledge and Underſtanding* *. And it is every where made a Part of the Duty of thoſe to whom that Charge is committed. They are required to *give themſelves to the Miniſtry of the Word* †. And their Work is expreſſed by *labouring in the Word and Doctrines*

* Jer. iii. 15.

† Acts vi. 4.

Doctrine *. This they are to make their Business; and to lay out themselves therein; watching thereunto with all Diligence, and using their best Endeavours, by preaching, to gather Souls to Christ, and to build them up in Knowledge, and Faith, and Holiness; and in order thereunto, to instruct, and warn, and reprove, and exhort them continually. This is a Charge, which with great awful Solemnity, is given to Timothy †. *I charge thee, saith the Apostle, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the Quick and Dead at his appearing: preach the Word; be instant in Season and out of Season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all Long-Suffering and Doctrine. There is an awful Necessity upon them; it is their Charge, their Business; and wo be unto them, if they preach not the Gospel* ||.

And as they are to make preaching their Business; so they must see to it, that what they feed the Flock with, be the sincere Word of God. The Matter of our preaching, should not be our own Notions and Fancies, but the Word of God; and that pure and uncorrupt, without adding to it, or diminishing from it; *as of Sincerity, as of God, in the Sight of God speaking in Christ* §. The Word

* 1 Tim. v. 17.
|| 1 Cor. ix. 16.

† 2 Tim. iv. 12.
§ 2 Cor. ii. 17.

Word of God contains in it all things necessary for Faith and Practice, and is the great Standard both of Doctrine and Duty; the Test by which all Creeds and Confessions, all Opinions and Practices, are to be tried. *To the Law, and to the Testimony; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no Light in them **. This is the sole Object of the Faith of Christians; and should therefore be the Matter of our preaching. And that it may be so indeed, we should be diligent in searching the Scriptures, *which are profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Instruction in Righteousness: that the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works †*; we should give Attendance to Reading and Meditation; and be found in the Use of all Means, with fervent Prayer for the Illumination, Guidance, and Direction, of the good Spirit of God, that we may be led into a spiritual Acquaintance with them, and the Mystery of the Wisdom and Grace of God contained in them. Further,

Ministers should be careful, not only to feed their Flocks with the sincere Word of God in general; but particularly and chiefly to insist on those Subjects, that are most useful and important, and suited to affect their Hearers, with respect to their great and everlasting Concern-

* Isa. viii. 20.

† 1 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

Concernments. For tho' none of the Doctrines of Faith are to be concealed, but the whole Counsel of God declared; yet some Doctrines are of much greater Use and Importance than others; and these should be especially inculcated upon the Minds of the People. The Apostle puts a peculiar Mark upon some Points of Doctrine, *as faithful Sayings, and worthy of all Acceptation*; by which he seems to mean something more than that they are barely true (for so are all the Words of God); but that they are Doctrines of that Weight and Importance to the Souls of Men, that every Minister is bound in Faithfulness to insist often and much upon them. The great Doctrines of the Trinity, and the Godhead of Christ; the Guilt and Corruption of fallen Nature; the Freeness and Sovereignty of the Grace of God, in chusing, and redeeming, and saving Sinners; the Incarnation of Christ, and the propitiatory Nature of his Sufferings; Justification by his Righteousness alone, imputed to us, and received by Faith; the efficacious Operations of the Spirit of God, as necessary to our Regeneration and Sanctification; the Necessity of real, inward, and practical Holiness; and of worshipping God according to his Word, in the Name of Christ, and in the Communion of Saints; together with the Perseverance of the Saints; these, and many more, are faithful Sayings, and such as we should preserve pure and uncorrupted

corrupted our selves, and teach and inculcate upon our People. We should endeavour to affect them with their great Concern in these things; and by Manifestation of the Truth, by evidencing a becoming Zeal for the Glory of God, and Compassion for their Souls, commend our selves to their Consciences in the Sight of God. I add under this Head,

In order to feed our Flocks with Food proper for them, we should consider their several Cases and Circumstances, and suit our Preaching, as much as we can, thereunto. Ministers are not to preach at random; but they are required *rightly to divide the Word of Truth, and to give to every One their Portion* *. And this requires a great deal of Skill and Prudence and diligent Consideration. In the Flock there are some Lambs; young and tender and weak; some are as Sheep, grown to some Strength and Maturity; some are heavy and burdened with Sin, and Temptations, and Afflictions, like those that are with Young †. And it concerns us, and we should labour, to acquaint our selves with their different Conditions and Circumstances; their Strength or Weakness; their Growth or Defects in Knowledge; their Sins and Duties;

* 2. Tim. ii. 15. † Isai. xl. 11.

Duties ; their Temptations and Wants : that we may suit our Discourses to their several Cases ; that we may dispense Terror to whom Terror, and Comfort to whom Comfort is due ; that we may instruct the ignorant, reprove the sinful, heal the diseased, succour the tempted, comfort the disconsolate, and give to every one their Meat and Portion in due Season. Thus should Elders *feed the Flock of God* with Knowledge and Understanding, by preaching the sincere Word of God to them. And they should *feed* them likewise by ruling them according to such Directions, and with such Discipline, as the Word of God prescribes : for pastoral Feeding includeth in it Rule and Discipline, as well as Teaching and Instruction. And this leads us to the next Duty, they are exhorted to in the Text, *viz,*

Secondly, To take the Oversight of the Flock. Feed the Flock of God, *taking the Oversight of it*, or discharging the Office of Bishops * towards it. They should be serious and solemn in administering the Seals of the Covenant. These are committed to them, as Stewards of the Mysteries of God ; and they should be faithful in the Distribution of them. They should heedfully attend to the Institution of Christ, as to the

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* Επισκοπῆς.

Way and Manner of their Administration; to the Edification of the Church, as to the Times and Seasons of it, especially with regard to the Lord's Supper; and to the Rule of the Gospel in admitting Persons thereunto. As they must take heed of setting up any unscriptural Terms of Communion; so they must also of prostituting the Sacraments of Christ. They are required to separate the precious from the vile, and the clean from the unclean; and must not suffer themselves, upon any Account, to give holy things to Dogs, as the Scripture expresseth it, (*i. e.*) to Men of unsound Minds, or corrupt Morals; but must take what Care they can, that they be administred only to those, who are meet and worthy according to the Rule of the Word. Again,

They should be very careful in inspecting the State and Behaviour of their Flocks. They are set over them as Shepherds, and are required to watch over them with all Care and Diligence. They should not be negligent, or partial in the Exercise of Christian Discipline; but maintain the Order of Christ in his House, and heedfully observe the Walk and Conversation of those, committed to their Charge; and faithfully reprove, and rebuke, and admonish, as Occasion requires; and not suffer themselves to be influenced, in these things, by Favour or Affection on the one hand, or by Prejudice

judice and Ill-will on the other. It ill becomes Ministers to be partial, and to have Respect of Persons, or to prefer one before another, upon any secular Account; and therefore the Apostle, with great solemnity, charges Timothy, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect Angels, to watch against it *. Thus are Elders *to take the Oversight* of their Flocks. And there is another Duty urged on them in the Text; and that is,

Thirdly, To be Ensamples to the Flock, Types † or Copies for their Flocks to imitate or write after. They are Shepherds, and should go before their Flocks in the Exercise of all those Graces and Duties, they recommend to them in their Doctrine. This is particularly inculcated upon Ministers, who are required to be *Examples to the Believers in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity* || ; and in *all things to shew themselves Patterns of good Works* §. This is indeed to be Guides to the Flock, when we not only call them to their Duty, but go before them in it ourselves. We are to shine as Lights in our Walk, as well as in the Pulpit. And as a holy Conversation will give Force to all our Perswasions, and shew Men that

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* 1 Tim. v. 21.

|| 1 Tim. iv. 12.

† Τύποι.

§. Tit. ii. 7.

the Rules of Religion are practicable, since we are enabled our selves to reduce them to Practice; so without this, we shall be self-condemned before God, and render all our Attempts fruitless among our People. We shall counter-act our great Design, and make our selves, by way of Eminency, Transgressors, if we pull down and destroy by our bad Examples, what we seem to take pains to build up with the Words of our Mouths. Nor can we expect, that others should give Credit to our Doctrine, when we visibly contradict it in our Practice. We should therefore be very cautious as to this, that our Ministry be not blamed or rendred fruitless.

These are the Duties, which the Apostle here urgeth upon the Elders of Churches. And I can but very briefly hint at,

III. The Manner in which they are required to attend to, and perform those Duties. Now this is,

I. With Diligence and Labour. This, some think, is intimated in the Text, when the Apostle saith, *Feed the Flock of God*, [τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν] which the Text in our Translation reads, *which is among you*, but in the Margin it is rendred [*as much as in you is*]. As they are to give themselves to the Ministry of the Word; so they are to labour

labour therein * with the uttermost of their Strength, even to Fatigation and Weariness. They are required *to feed the Flock of God, and take the Oversight of it,*

2. *Not by Constraint, but willingly*; not as it were, constrained by the Fear of Man or the Dread of what they may suffer, or the Woe impendent, if they do not perform it; but voluntarily, and as a free-will Offering to Christ, and from a ready Mind to serve the Interest of Souls. Conformably to which the Apostle saith, *Necessity is laid upon me; yea, Wo, is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel; but if I do this willingly, I have a Reward* †. Ministers should not be driven to their Work by mere Necessity, nor perform it as a Task or Burden which they would gladly get rid of, if they knew how to live without it; but should do it with a willing Mind from the Love they have to, and the Pleasure they take in, the Work; from the Compassion they bear to the Souls of Men, and the Zeal they have for the Redeemer's Interest in the World; and as those that count it their greatest Honour, and are willing to spend and be spent in the service of Christ and Souls. Nor should they be drawn to it,

3. By

* Ad ultimum Virium usque ad fatigationem.

† 1. Cor. ix. 16, 17.

3. By the Prospects of worldly Advantage. They that preach the Gospel, are to live of the Gospel. But far be it from faithful Ministers to make this their great and principal End. They are required to do it, *not for filthy Lucre*: not for any Profits or Emoluments attending the Churches, to whom they minister, or any Perquisites belonging to their Office; but of a ready Mind, regarding the Flock more than the Fleece, and sincerely and chearfully endeavouring to serve and promote the Interest of Christ and precious Souls. To be driven to their Work by Necessity is bad; but to be drawn to it by Covetousness is much worse. Nor are they,

4. To behave themselves with a lordly Spirit, exercising a tyrannical, imperious Power over their People. They are not to act, as if they were *Lords over God's Heritage*. Christ has made them Stewards to give his People Meat in due Season, to dispense his Gospel, to enforce his Laws and Precepts, and to use his appointed Discipline; but he has not entrusted them with a Despotical Power; nor has he made the People subject to their arbitrary Laws, or to any unscriptural Fancies or Inventions, should they attempt to impose any such upon them. He expressly cautioned his Apostles against this tyrannical Disposition *. Nor did the Apostles themselves.

* Mat. xxvi. 25, 26.

elves claim any such Power: *not that we have Dominion over your Faith, saith Paul, but are Helpers of your Joy* *. And not pretending to it themselves, they might very well forbid others to *lord it over God's Heritage*. The Flock is God's Lot, his Inheritance; therefore their Elders must not lord it over them. Their Power is utterly exclusive of all rigid Authority, being given them for Edification and not for Destruction.

Thus have we considered the Duties incumbent on Elders; and the Manner in which they are to attend to them, as expressed in the Text. And I have Room only for a few Words under the next general Head propounded, which is,

IV. To consider the Motive or Argument, with which the Apostle enforces these Duties upon them: namely, the great and glorious Reward, which such as are faithful in the Discharge of the Duties of their Office, shall receive from Christ. They may possibly miss of their Reward here from the Hands of Men; but if they be diligent and faithful in their Work, *they shall receive a Crown of Glory, that fadeth not away, when the chief Shepherd shall appear*.

By the *chief Shepherd* is meant the Lord Jesus Christ. *He is the chief Shepherd of the*

* 2. Cor. i. 24.

the whole Flock of God. His own the Sheep are. He bought them; he rules, and defends, and saves them. And he is the *chief Shepherd* also over all inferior Shepherds. Ministers, the wisest, the best, the highest, the most eminent of them, are but Under-Shepherds to Christ. He is infinitely superior to them all. From him they receive their Office and Commission. It is in his Name, and by his Authority, they act; and to him they are accountable for all they are intrusted with, and all they do in the Discharge of their Office.

This chief Shepherd, the Apostle tells us *will appear*. He will appear to take an Account of all the Under-shepherds, What they have done with his Sheep: what Care they have taken of the Flock committed to them: and how they discharged the Work of their Office. And as the Consequence of this Appearance and Account will be very dreadful and terrible to the slothful and unfaithful; so it will be very glorious and joyful to those who are diligent and faithful, and are enabled to attend to the Duties of their Office according to the foregoing Directions. For,

When the chief Shepherd shall appear *they shall receive a Crown, a Crown of Glory and a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away* (q. d.) The Work I have set before you is of the greatest Importance to the Honour

of God, and the Souls of Men; But withal it is attended with very great Difficulties, and requires a very painful Diligence and Industry. However, my dear Brethren and Fellow-Elders, take Courage, and be of good heart; fear not to venture upon it; chearfully undertake, and encounter the Difficulties of it; grudge no Pains, and think no Labour too much in the Discharge of it; be not weary, nor faint in your Minds; for you may assure your selves, *that your Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.* You may expect, that it shall not altogether want Success at present. However, if you be diligent and faithful, you may be assured, that you shall not fail of a full Reward hereafter; for a Crown, a Crown of Glory, a never fading, and ever flourishing Crown of Glory, awaits you, and shall be bestowed upon you, at the Day and Appearance of Christ, the *chief Shepherd.* This is the most powerful Argument, that the Apostle could possibly suggest to them. And this short Paraphrase is sufficient to manifest the Force of it.

Thus have I gone thro' the Particulars contained in the Text. And the due Consideration of these things is enough to make the best and wisest of Ministers to cry out, with the Apostle *, *Who is sufficient for these things*

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things? We may hence learn, What need Ministers have of divine Grace and Help; and that the Grace and Help of God should be most earnestly and importunately sought for them, both by themselves and by their People. These, and many other useful Reflections might be made on what hath been delivered. But I shall only, by way of Inference,

V. Offer a few general Hints concerning the Duty incumbent upon the Flock. The *Flock of God* is a Title and Denomination expressive of Duty, as well as of Dignity. And I might put you in Mind of,

I. Your Duty and Obligation to the chief Shepherd. That you admire his Grace and Condescension in taking you into this Relation; and in all the Care he takes of you, and all the Provision he has made for you, as such. He hath not only redeemed you with the Price of his Blood; but, when you were as Sheep going astray, hath found you out in your Wandrings, and by the Power of his Grace brought you into his Fold. He has provided fresh Springs and green Pastures for you: instituted Ordinances and Sacraments: and appointed under-Shepherds to lead and feed you. Surprising Grace and Condescension! Be sensible of it, and thankful for it. And be careful to express your Sense of, and Gratitude for it by a suitable Carriage and Demeanour towards

towards him. Resign up your selves sincerely to his Government and Conduct. Hear his Voice, and follow him. Receive his Doctrine, and keep it pure and uncorrupt. Conform to his Precepts and Example. Observe and keep close to his Institutions, both for Worship and Order. And always depend upon his Wisdom and Power, and Faithfulness, who has undertaken to guide you by his Counsel, and afterwards to bring you to his Glory. I might suggest likewise,

2. The Duty you own to one another, as the Flock of God. That you be loving, and useful, and sociable. That you walk together in all the Ordinances of Christ, and in all Acts of Worship, for Communion with him, and among your selves. That you *watch over one another ; and exhort one another to Love and good Works ;* and endeavour, by all means, to promote the Edification of each other. That you be careful to preserve the Peace of God in your own Breasts, and in all your mutual Converses together. That you be ready for the Discharge of all the Offices of Love to one another ; and guard against every thing that may disturb the Peace of the Society, or create an Alienation of Heart and Affection from each other. That you pray with, and for one another. That you defend one another from Harm ; their Souls from Sin by faithful Warnings, and seasonable, prudent, and affectionate Reproofs ; and their good Names from

Slander, discountenancing all Back-biting and Tale-bearing, not easily taking up an ill Report against any, and favourably interpreting all doubtful Words and Actions in the most equal and candid Sense. That you be ready to communicate one to another, as Members of the same Body, what you have received of the Lord. In a Word, that *you submit yourselves one to another ; and with all Lowliness and Meekness, with all Long-suffering and Forbearing one another in Love, endeavour to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace ;* and walk together in holy Love and Communion, one with another, according to the Rules of the Gospel. All this is included in the Direction, which the Apostle gives the Jewish Converts, in the Verse following the Text, *that they would be subject one to another.* But there is another Part of your Duty, that I must not omit the Mention of ; and that is,

3. The Honour and Respect, the Esteem and Submission, that are due from the Flock to those Pastors and Ministers, who are diligent and faithful in the Discharge of the Work of their Office. Their Business is to feed the Flock, and take the Oversight of it. And this is a Work not more honourable and difficult to them, than it is beneficial to the Flock. It is designed for your Edification and Salvation ; and upon this Account, you are obliged, in point of Interest, as well as Duty, to esteem their Persons, to honour their Function, and

to

to give them all due Encouragement in their Work. The *Thessalonians* were required, *not only to know them that laboured among them, and were over them in the Lord ; but to esteem them very highly in Love for their Work's sake* *. They were to esteem them in Love *ὑπερπερισσῶς*. The Word carries such an Emphasis in it, as cannot well be expressed in *English*, and imports Esteem and Love to an Hyperbole. Such an Affection and Esteem did the *Galatians* manifest to the Apostle and his Ministry †. However they were then cooled, yet he bears them Witness, that at his first preaching the Gospel among them, *they received him as an Angel of God, as tho' Christ himself in Person had preached unto them ; and so great was their Esteem of him, and so warm their Affection to him, that they could, if it would have been any Advantage to him, even have plucked out their very Eyes, and have given them to him*. The Expression is indeed hyperbolical ; but it shewed the Greatness of their Esteem, and the Intenseness of their Affection, and is a Pattern worthy of your Imitation. And you are as much concerned in point of Interest, as in point of Duty, to imitate it ; since without a becoming Esteem of, and Love for your Ministers, you are like to receive little or no Profit from their Labours. If it be enquired

* 1 Theff. v. 12, 13.

† Gal. iv. 14, 15.

quired, How you are to express your Esteem and Affection for them? I answer, By your respectful Carriage towards them. By bearing with their involuntary Weaknesses and Infirmities. Ministers, even the best of them, are but Men of like Passions with your selves. They are attended with Infirmities, and Failings, and Imperfections, as well as others, which a true Affection will make Allowance for, and, instead of magnifying, will endeavour to cover. Again, by a tender Regard to their Reputation. Their Usefulness depends much upon this; and therefore as you should be very careful not to wound it your selves, so you should not easily take up an ill Report from others. Again, (for I can but mention these things) you should express your Love to your Ministers by constant fervent Prayer to God for them. The Work they are called to, and the Trust committed to them, are such, as without Divine Grace, none are sufficient for. You should therefore pray daily and earnestly for them, that God, by his special Assistance, would enable them to the Discharge of the same. God commands it; your Ministers beseech it (*Brethren, pray for us* *); their Weakness wants it; and your Souls require it. It is your Duty; and it is your Interest

* 1 Theff. v. 25.

interest too: for the more you pray for them,
 the more they are likely to profit you. Here-
 by you may help them to study and preach;
 and the more Grace you obtain for them by
 Prayer, the greater Blessings will they be to
 you and your's. Again, express your Value
 and Esteem for them by a diligent Attendance
 on their Ministrations; and by obeying and
 submitting your selves to them in their Office.
 Yield a ready Obedience to those Commands,
 and conform to those Rules, which from the
 Scriptures they shall make known to you.
 Receive their Admonitions, and accept, not
 only with Meekness, but with Thankfulness,
 their Reproofs. The Apostle enjoins the *He-*
brews, To obey them that had the Rule over
them, and submit themselves †. They are set
 over you in the Lord; and they watch for
 your Souls, as those that must give an Ac-
 count; therefore obey and submit your selves
 to them. I do not mean, that you are requi-
 red to pay them a blind implicit Obedience,
 or an absolute Submission. No. You are not
 to take your Religion upon Trust, or *to call*
any Man Father upon Earth *. You are to
 try all things, and prove all things; and sub-
 mit to them only so far, as what they do,
 or deliver, is agreeable to the Mind and Will
 of God, revealed in his Word: But, so far,
 you

 † Heb. xiii. 17.

* Matth. xxiii. 9.

you are obliged to obey and submit your selves
 That Injunction which followeth the Text
*[Likewise ye Younger, submit your selves to the
 Elder]* is generally understood, as a Direction
 to the Flock, how to behave to their Mini-
 sters. And because the proud Nature, and
 selfish Interests of Men, are ready to rise up
 in Opposition to this Duty of Submission to
 their Elders (as well as to that of Subjection to
 one another), the Apostle adviseth them, in
 order thereunto, to be clothed with Humility.
 This will render Obedience and Submission
 easy and pleasant; whereas if you be proud
 and disobedient, God will set himself against
 you; for *he resisteth the proud, when he giveth
 Grace to the humble.* Once more, You are to
 express your Love and Esteem of them by af-
 fording them a competent Support and Main-
 tenance. It is the Will of Christ, that *they
 who preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel*
 and that *he that is taught in the Word, should
 communicate to him that teacheth, in all good
 things* *. This is not left as an arbitrary thing
 which you may do, or may not do, at Plea-
 sure; but it is challenged as your Duty. How
 frequently and earnestly doth the Apostle ex-
 hort the Churches to it in the New Testa-
 ment? That Apostolical Canon, *That the El-*

* 1 Cor. ix. 14. Gal. vi. 6.

ders that rule well, and labour in the Word and Doctrine, should be counted worthy of double Honour †, is meant, as of Esteem, so of Maintenance; as appears from the Reason and Proof in the following Verse; *For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the Ox that treadeth out the Corn: and, The Labourer is worthy of his Reward.* And by calling it Honour, he hints to us the Nature of this Maintenance, that it is *Honorarium*, an honorary Tribute; and therefore not mercenary Wages on the one hand, nor Alms or Charity on the other.

Thus have we considered the Duty of Elders, as expressed in the Text; and from thence inferred the Duty of the Flock. And what remains now, but that both Ministers and People conscientiously attend to the faithful Discharge of their respective Duties. Here,

I might particularly address my self to my Reverend Brother, who is called to the Oversight of this Church. You have taken upon your self, Sir, the Charge of this Part of the *Flock of God*. And permit me to intreat and conjure you, *in the Name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST who shall judge both Quick and Dead at his Appearing, to feed the same not by Constraint,*

† 1 Tim. v. 17.

strait, but willingly; not for filthy Lucre but of a ready Mind. Feed it with the Doctrine of Christ, and preserve That pure and uncorrupted. Preach the Word, be instant in Season, out of Season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all Long-suffering, and Doctrine. Give your self unto Prayer, and the Ministry of the Word; and study to shew yourself approved unto God, a Workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth, and giving to every one his Portion. And in order to that End, give attendance to Reading, and Meditation; study the Holy Scriptures with all Care and Diligence; and be earnest and fervent in praying for the enlightning and assisting Influences of the blessed Spirit. Take heed to the whole Ministry, committed to you, that you fulfil it. As a Steward in the House of God, be serious and faithful in administering the Seals of the Covenant. Attend to the Rule of the Church with Diligence, but with Humility and Impartiality. Watch over the whole Flock, as one that must give an Account. Be careful to preserve and maintain the Order and Discipline of Christ; but take heed of lording it over God's Heritage. Look to your general Deportment, and let it, in all respects, be suitable to your Character. Walk circumspectly, and in Wisdom towards all; but be particularly careful to be an Ensample to your Flock. Go before them in the Way you direct them to walk in; and

and let them see, make it manifest in your whole Conduct, that you heartily believe what you say, and do in your publick Ministrations. And, that you may do so indeed, think upon the Appearance of the Chief Shepherd, and that Account you must give up unto him. Revolve in your Thoughts, as how terrible the Condition will then be of slothful and unfaithful Shepherds; so how glorious the Reward will be of such, as obtain Mercy to be diligent and faithful. And improve this Consideration for your Support and Encouragement under, and against, all the Difficulties and Trials, you may meet withal in your Work. It is indeed a great and difficult Service, you are called unto. But he hath promised to be with you in it, whose Grace is sufficient to support and enable you to surmount all the Difficulties of it; and to reward your faithful Endeavours in it with *a Crown of Glory, that fa-
th not away.* Wherefore having such an Assurance *be stedfast and unmovable, always
bounding in the Work of the Lord.* And may the God of all Grace be with you, direct, assist, and strengthen you, and purchase you the multiplied Gifts and Graces of his Holy Spirit. May he make you a Blessing to this People, and this

People a Comfort to you. May he render you eminently useful in his House; and crown your Labours with abundant Success, to his Glory, to your own Peace and Comfort, and to the Good and Edification of many Souls.

And for you, the Members of this Christian Society, suffer me to beseech you, Brethren, *to know them that labour among you and are over you in the Lord; and esteem them very highly in Love for their Work's sake; and be at Peace among your selves** You have had occasion given you, to find both of Mercy and Affliction. As you have been highly distinguished and favoured by God with a Succession of Pastors, eminent for their Gifts and Usefulness; so hath pleased God to bring you under several Rebukes of his Providence, by removing several of them in a few Years; and particularly your last, in the Prime of his Days and in the midst of his Usefulness; when according to the Course of Nature, he might have been continued many Years a Blessing to you. For these things you ought, and I hope you have been enabled

* 1 Thess. v. 12, 13.

to humble your selves under the mighty Hand of God, and enquire, *Wherefore the Lord hath thus contended with you.* But at the same Time, you have great Reason to be thankful to the chief Shepherd, who hath not been unmindful of you in your destitute Condition; who hath not only preserved his other Servant *, who labours in the Word and Doctrine among you; but has now provided for you another Overseer, to feed and lead you. Regard him, from this Day forward, *as over you in the Lord.* Receive him with all Gladness. Hold him in Reputation. Be free with him in the Concerns of your Souls. Readily receive Instruction from him, and Reproof too as there may be occasion. Let him have the Help of your most serious Prayers. And give him all the Encouragement you can in his Work; and that particularly, as by other Ways, so by endeavouring to maintain Peace among your selves. Whereunto you have attained, be careful to walk by the same Rule, and mind the same thing. Endeavour after an Unity of Judgment in all important Truths, and of Practice all important Duties. But in smaller and more indifferent

* The Reverend Mr Conder.

indifferent Matters, exercise Condescension and Forbearance towards one another in Love; and so fulfil the Law of Christ. Let me beseech you to attend to that warm Expostulation of the Apostle *, *If there be any Consolation in Christ, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies; be like minded, having the same Love, being of one Accord, one Mind. Let nothing be done thro' Strife, or Vain-Glory; but in Lowliness of Mind, let each esteem other better than themselves.* These things, which ye have heard and seen, do: And the God of Peace shall be with you †.

* Phil. ii. 1—3. † — iv. 9.

F I N I S.

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